

## Interview with Ambassador Donald P. Gregg

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR DONALD P. GREGG

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: March 3, 2004

Copyright 2008 ADST

[Note: This interview was not edited by Ambassador Gregg.]

*Q: Today is March 3, 2004. This is an interview with Donald P. Gregg. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and for the Luce Foundation. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. So to begin with, I wonder Don, could you tell me when and where you were born and a little about where did you grow up.*

GREGG: I was born in New York on December 5, 1927, and raised in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. My father was in YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association). He was national secretary for boy's work. I had TB (tuberculosis) as a kid, so I didn't really go to school until I was about 12. I went into the army

*Q: How did you go to school?*

GREGG: I was taught to read at home. In those days that is about all you needed to have done. I went in the army at age 17 in 1945 right out of high school, and later went to Williams College.

*Q: In the army where did you serve?*

## Library of Congress

GREGG: I was trained as a crypt-analyst and didn't get overseas. I had enlisted for 18 months and they didn't have enough time to send me overseas. So I entered Williams in the fall of '47, majored in philosophy, graduated in 1951. I had been signed up by CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) at that time.

[Portion of interview missing because the recording is too low to be able to transcribe]

GREGG: ?I got in because NSA you know the army having spent a lot of money training me as a crypt-analyst, and the interview was [inaudible] that I was not at all interested, [inaudible] the CIA. I said, "What is CIA?" He said, "Oh they jump out of airplanes and save the world." I said, "Sign me up."

Q: *[inaudible]*

GREGG: Paramilitary, yes. Well that meant planning clandestine operations, [inaudible] on the island of Saipan [inaudible] other people who were paratroopers down the line, all that kind of stuff.

Q: *Did you go with Bob Dylan and all that stuff?*

GREGG: No I was a very close friend of Jack Downey's. He was shot down in front of me some 20 years before.

Q: *Well now, sort of moving ahead because this is going to sort of concentrate on your career. You first went to Korea when?*

GREGG: I first set foot in Korea in 1968. I had been in Japan for nine years. I spoke Japanese fluently. I had become very interested in Korea through, as I saw through the Japanese prism. I had become very interested, and some of my CIA friends had been stationed there. I took a trip there in 1968, spent three or four days there, took a train down to Pusan and came back via [inaudible] to Japan, was tremendously impressed by

## Library of Congress

the vitality of the people. It was the only job I ever requested in my CIA career was the assignment to Korea. I was assigned there in 1973.

*Q: Well you mentioned the Japanese prism. My understanding is the Japanese basically looked down upon the Koreans.*

GREGG: Very much so.

*Q: I mean had that, what had sparked your interest. I mean were you trying to see the world through a different perspective?*

GREGG: Yes. I mean I thought of the Japanese blaming the Koreans for everything from crime to pollution to traffic problems, and yet one could see that progress was being made in Korea, I was struck by the fact that the Koreans were so supportive of us in Vietnam. They had two full divisions there for several years, over 300,000 people. So I just wanted to see a neighboring country about which I had heard a great deal from friends who were stationed there.

*Q: Did you, were you able to pick up any sort of the culture of Korea at the time, I mean the first visit?/ Did you sort of change your view?*

GREGG: I was just really impressed by the directness of the people, by the beauty of the country, by the strong sense of history. I have always had an interest in pottery and the ceramics are gorgeous. I bought a few pieces of ceramics. It was just a very interesting experience. I still have a letter I wrote to my mother on the way back saying that this was a country that I really wanted to see more of.

*Q: Well you had also served in Vietnam. Did you have any contact with the Koreans at that time?*

## Library of Congress

GREGG: No. I was in charge of the ten provinces around Saigon from '70 to '72. They were in I Corps. I occasionally saw a Korean officer, but I did not have any contact with them.

*Q: What sort of feedback were you getting from your colleagues about the Koreans?*

GREGG: How tough they were, and how the pacification was really very effective I think they were in a couple of provinces. They were very tough, very ruthless.

*Q: Well then you got assigned to Korea in 1973 and were there for two years. What were you doing there?*

GREGG: I was chief of station for CIA.

*Q: What can you talk about what you were doing at that time?*

GREGG: Well the major issue was North Korea. I had been to North Korea twice now. I told them and I tell others that I think North Korea is the longest running failure in the history of American espionage, because we have not been very successful in recruiting them. My job was to try to cooperate with the South Koreans in learning more about North Korea. It also was a very touchy time for U.S.-South Korean relations because by 1973 we had withdrawn from Vietnam or had been evicted. Park Chung Hee, the dictator, military leader was losing faith in us as a strong ally. He was acquiring weapons systems without telling us. He started a nuclear program which we discovered and stopped. It was a very interesting and difficult time for the relationship. My counterpart was a man named Lee Hu Rak who was the director of Korean CIA. He had gone to North Korea in 1972 and had met Kim Il Sung. In my first meeting with Lee Hu Rak, I took an instant dislike to him. But I asked him how did you feel when you sat down opposite your lifelong enemy. He said, "Oh, very strong. One man rule. Quite a guy." Full of admiration. I think that he came back

## Library of Congress

and said to Park Chung Hee, if we are going to talk to those people, we really are going to have to tighten up. So there was a good deal of tightening up.

Park Chung Hee had narrowly beaten Kim Dae Jung in an election in 1971 or '72. There were charges that the votes were rigged, and Kim Dae Jung at that point when I first went to Seoul, he had been in the United States speaking very critically of Park Chung Hee. He had went to Japan and continued his diatribes against his what was going on in Korea. So about two months after I was there, Kim Dae Jung was kidnapped from his hotel room in Tokyo, and this immediately became known. The ambassador to Korea at that time was Phil Habib, a man for whom I have just tremendous admiration. He called me into his office and said, "I know how things work here." They are not going to kill Kim Dae Jung for 24 hours, until I have weighed in, and if you can tell me where he is and who has him, I think we can keep him alive." So fortunately we were able to do that, and Kim Dae Jung was tied hand and foot in a small boat. He had been locked up and told that he was going to be thrown into the sea. An airplane flew over the boat in which he was, and I guess some kind of message was sent, and he was released or untied.

*Q: What was your role in this? Did you go to your counterpart and say "don't do it?"*

GREGG: No I didn't. We were able to tell the ambassador that I can't go into details about that, but it was KCIA that had kidnapped Kim Dae Jung.

*Q: Well then what did he do?*

GREGG: What did he do? Habib made a representation to the Korean government saying it is your own agency that has done this, and you damn well better keep him alive or it is going to be a tremendous spot on your escutcheon and it will do huge damage to our relations.

*Q: When you arrived there, what was your impression as station chief of dealing with the KCIA. During part of the time when you were doing this, I was in Athens as consul general*

## Library of Congress

*there. I had you know, very much the distinctive question that we were very much, very close to the Greek junta and their intelligence organization. In fact too close. I mean, could you describe the relationship?*

GREGG: Well it was a very difficult relationship because we had KCIA federally penetrated. Which was one of my major jobs because it was an organization basically out of control. I found very quickly that they talked about North Korea as a threat but their real effort was in stemming any kind of dissent within South Korea. That led to one of the major events in my CIA career, because after it became known that KCIA had kidnapped Kim Dae Jung, riots broke out on a number of campuses including Seoul University, which is the leading university in Korea. And the KCIA arrested an American-trained Korean professor named Che, accused him of stirring up these riots on the campus, and either tortured him to death, or tortured him to a point where he jumped out of a window to avoid further torture. We also knew that. We knew exactly what had happened. So I reported that back to my headquarters. I was received and noted, and I then sent a message back saying that I wanted to protest this because I felt that it was absolutely unacceptable.

I was told that I had a message from a man named Ted Shackley who was my boss. "Stop trying to save the Koreans from themselves. That is not your job. Your job is to report what is going on." So I disobeyed orders, and I told CIA this. They know it, so this is not a secret from the agency. My other contact was the head of the presidential protective force, which would be the equivalent of our secret service. He is a man for whom I have quite a lot of respect. He was sort of a Korean samurai type. He did not like Lee Hu Rak. I knew that. So I went to him, and I said, "I am speaking personally. I have no authorization to do this. I am just speaking on my own, but I want to tell you how badly I feel about what was done to Professor Che by the Korean CIA. I came here on the assumption that I would be working with the Korean CIA against our common enemy North Korea, and here I find that they are much more intent on keeping dissent under control in South Korea." I said, "I am very unhappy working with an organization that does that sort of thing." That is about all I said. He took notes and thanked me. A week later, Lee Hu Rak was fired. He went into hiding,

## Library of Congress

and was found in the Caribbean and was brought back and I think was put into jail. He is now a potter. The replacement that they put in was a man named Chin Shik Su, a former justice minister. He had me over and he said, "Mr. Gregg, I want you to know that I am going to be as much against those who break the law on behalf of this government as I am going to be against those who break the law against this government." One of his first acts was a proscription against torture. Now I think that is one of the best things I did as a CIA officer. I am very glad I did it and it I think was a major step in the relationship, certainly between our intelligence services and eventually between our countries.

*Q: That was probably, Ted Shackley was well know for his time in Vietnam. In fact he was a major figure there. Was he back in Washington?*

GREGG: Yes, he was chief of the Far East division at that time. I have had trouble with Shackley in Vietnam.

*Q: In his book, Ambassador Lilley talks about working with Shackley in Laos. What was your impression of Shackley? Where was he coming from?*

GREGG: Well he was a very effective hard line intelligence officer. I think he fully expected to be director until he ran afoul of a guy named Wilson who was more ruthless than he was.

*Q: But was this almost sort of the ambiance of the CIA-KCIA relationship at the time. You just observed that you didn't get too involved in what they were doing.*

GREGG: Well our job was to make sure that they didn't do anything crazy that could start a war with North Korea. I discovered and we eventually put a stop to the nuclear program. They got submarines when they weren't supposed to get them.

*Q: Were we concerned that Park Chung Hee might lunge to the North?*

## Library of Congress

GREGG: Yes. This was you know, five years after the Blue House raid.

*Q: You might explain what the Blue House raid was?*

GREGG: Well this incident was where a group of North Koreans dressed in South Korean uniforms infiltrated into Seoul, got close to the presidential mansion, Blue House, and all but one were killed. They tried to assassinate Park Chung Hee, and killed an awful lot of South Koreans before they went down. The North Koreans seized the Pueblo that same year. It is now known that the South Koreans trained a retaliatory force which at the last moment was stopped from going into North Korea to assassinate Kim Il Sung. So it was a very tense tough kind of relationship.

There were incidents along the DMZ and our ability to defend the peninsula if we had been attacked was very questionable. General Hollingsworth was there as commander of the joint ROK-U.S. I Corps. He and I had been together in Vietnam at the time of the attack in Easter of 1972. He was a tough profane combat general. He and I were very close. I had been his intelligence advisor at a very tough time in Vietnam and had given him a lot of information which he had used, so he and I liked each other immensely. I remember standing with him on the bank, of I guess, the Imjin River. We looked up north and he had a lot of Korean generals with him. He said, "We are going to kill every son of a bitch to the north end of the FEBA. Not one of those bastards is going to set foot in South Korea." That is what they loved to hear. Then he would get with my by himself and he would say, "Well I wish that were true. We are outgunned, outmuscled. I don't think we have a chance of defending Seoul." So it was a very tense time.

*Q: Well I think the general feeling in the long run was the might of the West's air power and all that would prevail, but it was not going to be an easy task.*

GREGG: Absolutely not. People forget that when the line was drawn and Korea was divided, the Korean peninsula is quite like the Italian peninsula. You have served there.



## Library of Congress

The North has got mineral wealth and industry and the South was poor and agricultural. When the dividing line was made, the assumption was that North Korea would always be the stronger half. There has been a complete reversal of that.

*Q: At the time you were there, this is the '73 to '75 period. How, economically, how was the balance between North and South Korea?*

GREGG: I don't think we really knew. The South Koreans were beginning to make ships. They were beginning to make their first car which looked as though it was going to be a disaster. North Korea was very powerful militarily. They were getting aid from both the Soviet Union and China. Kim Il Sung was a master at not getting drawn in to either orbit totally and was able to play one off against the other. So the term economic basket case was originated in South Korea.

*Q: Applying to South Korea.*

GREGG: Yes. So I think the feeling in the early 70's was that the North was still the more powerful half of the peninsula.

*Q: Well were we getting any reading at all on the mindset of the North Koreans?*

GREGG: No, It was opaque. The North Koreans were almost unapproachable. Few were recruited in dismal places in Africa but it was impossible to communicate with them once they went home. No, it was a very poor insight that we had.

*Q: Was there the feeling,?I mean Kim Il Sung? we are talking about 50 years now since the truce. There has always been the feeling that Kim Il Sung might suddenly attack. What was sort of the attack alert while you were there?*

GREGG: We discovered the first tunnel that was being dug under the DMZ. I don't know how many were dug. It was a monstrous task. These were, you know, going to be invasion

## Library of Congress

channels. I remember on the golf course I used to play, every fairway has poles that would be stuck up at night to keep gliders from landing. There was a curfew in Seoul.

*Q: Yes. It was great if you had teenage kids, which I did.*

GREGG: Yes. So there was a constant tension, a feeling that the North might come south.

*Q: And there was an air raid alert once a month. Tanks in the street and all that.*

GREGG: Yes, that's right.

*Q: Well, what about the Korean military? Were you looking at the Korean military or was that somebody else's job?*

GREGG: Well the military attach# that was his primary job. There was, and it was interesting that in both the case of Park Chung Hee and later on Chung Du Won, these were generals who had not been close to the United States. These were very nationalistic generals whom we did not know very much about. There were cavalries of generals that had very strong allegiances. There was always the question of a coup occurring which did occur after Park Chung Hee was assassinated. But my primary focus was on the Korean CIA and on North Korea.

*Q: Where did the Korean CIA get its people? Was there a recruiting?*

GREGG: Yes, they had a recruiting system. Some of them, there was horrendous corruption on the part of some of the senior people. They had a couple of good people that I got to know, and they produced a man who later became ambassador to the United States, had come up through the ranks. So they attracted some good people. It was a mixture just as our CIA was but with more bad than good.

*Q: Well were we looking at the opposition parties and all this, I mean from the CIA viewpoint, or was this left to the political side of the Embassy?*

## Library of Congress

GREGG: Park Chung Hee stayed in office a long time. He was scared by the election that he almost lost to Kim Dae Jung. The election system was fixed so that he was assured of election as many times as he wanted to be president. One of the unforgettable times I had with him was in November of 1974. His wife had been assassinated earlier that year by a North Korean who tried to kill the president. The President ducked behind a bullet proof podium. He was making a speech, and the assassin killed his wife. But Gerald Ford had come through on his way to Vladivostok, and they had a very good meeting. Kissinger was with him.

So Park invited the ambassador, who was Dick Snyder at that point, and I guess it was General Stilwell who was head of the U.S. Forces Korea and me to play golf. I said a few things to Park Chung Hee. I had told my counterpart in the presidential protective force that I think one of the problems with President Park is he doesn't have a minister of bad news. He is very anxious. He just gets people to tell him what they think he wants to hear. So Park said something to me in Japanese, "I hear you think I need a minister of bad news." I said, "Yes, I think every strong leader does." Then at the dinner after the golf, it was astonishing because the minister of defense was there, and the general was there. They all sat like school boys with Pak at the head of the table. There was a long silence. I thought my Lord, what a waste. So I said to the president, I said, "Do you ever equate yourself with Kamal Ataturk of Turkey?" The reason I asked that is that was a man who had all power and he systematically created an opposition party and really dragged Turkey toward democracy, and is their greatest living hero still to this day. So Park sort of looked at me in sort of a rattlesnake might look at a rabbit, and said, "Well I don't know too much about Kamal Pasha, but I want to do for Korea what he did for Turkey, that is keep it militarily secure and make it economically powerful." Then he went on and said, "I am not going to stay in power forever. Some people have said that I have already stayed too long, and perhaps if I hadn't run for president last time, perhaps my wife would still be alive." So we all took that as indicating that he wasn't going to run for the presidency again, but

## Library of Congress

he did. He just had worn out his welcome, and it was a subsequent head of the KCIA who assassinated him, an astonishing turn of events.

*Q: When you think about all the efforts there, were there forces in this '73 to '75 time, were there forces stirring in Korea that looked like they were sponsored by the North Koreans at all?*

GREGG: There was talk of that. We felt that there were agents from the North that had gone in, that it had been infiltrated. We never felt that they were able to reach out, or if some were caught by local people, the unknown feeling was how much influence they had on campuses because there were riots on campuses. Because the anti-American feeling was quite strong in some student groups, it was sort of blamed on the North. Even when I was ambassador in '89 to '93. So they certainly were trying to influence things in the South, but we never were able to really expose, not at least while I was there, a major successful effort to that end.

*Q: Did you get involved even indirectly in the efforts of the KCIA to operate in the United States on Koreans living in the United States?*

GREGG: No, we would be absolutely against that. Absolutely not.

*Q: I mean I was just wondering whether the during this particular time you were station chief you were telling the KCIA to cut it out or something. Were things of that nature happening?*

GREGG: The only think I remember about that is when Kim Dae Jung had been in the United States and speaking critically of Park Chung Hee, he had been harassed by goons who we felt had been stirred up by the KCIA. I think the agency back there through its liaison told them to knock that off.

*Q: How did you find you fitted within the embassy?*

## Library of Congress

GREGG: Oh, I had a very excellent relationship. I was a pretty strong tennis player at that point, and I used to play tennis with, Habib and I got along wonderfully, and Dick Snyder and I got along wonderfully. I played tennis and golf with him. I was, you know, I was declared. Everybody in town knew that I was station chief. But I went out of my way, there had been a time when the station chief in Korea was more powerful than the ambassador, and I made absolutely clear that that was not the way I operated. I told the ambassador everything I was doing. I had a really excellent relationship with everybody.

*Q: What was your impression, how did Phil Habib operate?*

GREGG: Well, he had a sense of humor. He had a tremendous sense of leadership. He called me and he said, "You know there is only one rule that I have for you, and that is you will not see a man named Tongsun Park." This was a man who had been given a tremendous amount of money who was trying to buy his way into favor here in the United States, and he had found some willing takers on the part of some Congressmen and so forth. Phil Habib just hated him. (Editor's Note: Tongsun Park was at the center of a corruption scandal investigation begun in 1977 by the House Standards Committee of the 95th Congress which implicated congressmen in taking money or gifts from agents of the South Korean government.)

*Q: Did he get involved with Suzie? I think there was a young lady Suzie something or other?*

GREGG: No I didn't. Actually Pak was very, I had a funny invitation to meet somebody very important, and I wasn't told who it was. I went with my antenna up, and it was Tongsun Park. I just said, "Look this doesn't work. The ambassador has said I am not to see you and that is it." I walked out, and I told Phil. He cussed him out and said, "That son of a bitch." I thought he was terrific. He was living in the old style Korean house there, and it was about to fall down. He insisted that the embassy residence be built Korean style. It was, and it is an absolutely magnificent residence. Have you seen it?

## Library of Congress

*Q: Oh yes, I have gone there many times. It wasn't much fun to live in for some of the ambassadors because everything is sort of out in the open.*

GREGG: We loved it, and I thought it was just terrific. I remember waking up or going to bed after one of the many receptions that we had where everybody was raving about it. I said, "Let's name this house Habib House for Phil." So I sent a cable into the department. I knew the chief administration. He is a retired navy captain. I said, "Sweep all of the inevitable bureaucratic concerns out of your way, and let's name this Habib, House." Silence. No response. Three or four months later Phil died, and I sent another message in. I said, "For crying out loud, let's do it so it can be announced at his funeral." Silence. So I sent a third message in saying "What the hell is wrong with you people there." They said it takes an act of Congress to formally name a building. So I just put a plaque up on the front door saying "This is Habib House" and I put a plaque up on the gate, and it is now Habib House. I had had huge admiration for him. He had been in Vietnam. He was just deal honest, and a great leader. Everybody that knew him just admired him immensely.

*Q: How did you relate to the political section?*

GREGG: I had some very good friends. I am having lunch with a man who was political counselor, Paul Cleveland, today. He and I became lifelong friends.

*Q: Give Paul my regards.*

GREGG: Okay, I will. There was really no tension at all. There were some of the FSOs saying: oh you guys, you have much more in the way of expense accounts than we do, the inevitable kind of stuff. I would say look, the way we gather information is the most inefficient, expensive way there is. We are just trying to get what is not being given to us through diplomacy, and in those days, there is a tremendous amount. It was fascinating to me to go back as ambassador in '89. I knew the chief of station very well. In three and a half years there, he did his job very well. I don't think he told me one thing that was of any

## Library of Congress

particular surprise or value, because the relationship had matured. The military and we were much closer. We were working more harmoniously with the Korean CIA.

We still are not very good at getting people into the North, but they had stopped trying to acquire illegal weapons systems. The nuclear program had been ended, and the relationship had matured. It was a much closer alliance than before. There was a real need for CIA to do its thing when I was there, like stopping the nuclear program and saving Kim Dae Jung's life. I mean those were two big deals.

*Q: Did you observe the relationship between Habib and was it General Hollingsworth?*

GREGG: Well it was Stilwell. He was the guy in Seoul. Hollingsworth was up north. I think Hollingsworth and Habib would have gotten along just fine. They were both rough cut diamonds in the rough. Stilwell had a very prickly relationship with Habib, because I think there was still remnants of the rivalry between the army, the UN command and the embassy.

*Q: How did you find Snyder?*

GREGG: Fine, excellent. I liked him, and I had a very good relationship with him and am still very close friends to his widow.

*Q: He was sort of the prime architect of the reversion of Okinawa as a real Japanese hand. How did you find, did you see anything between Stilwell and Snyder?*

GREGG: Yes, some of the same under trappings.

*Q: It wasn't the greatest.*

GREGG: No, it was not. I think there was some real sort of mutual hostility. Stilwell, for example, when I reported some things on the Korean army, he would argue with me and say well that is not true. Because he wanted me to think that he knew everything that was

## Library of Congress

being done, and that nothing was being done that he didn't approve of, and that was not the case.

*Q: Did you get any feeling for the Korean military?*

GREGG: Yes, I used to play golf with the generals. I liked them. The guys I got to know, I liked because they made themselves accessible to me. They were westernized; they spoke English. I never learned Korean. I could speak Japanese to them, the older ones. But no I made some, Pak Sey Jik, the guy who made the Olympics, he and I became very close friends. There was a Tuesday Morning golf club. The Korean generals and the American general and me, yes, I got along with them very well.

*Q: Golf was a very important aspect of diplomacy, and frankly a lot of the Far East.*

GREGG: Yes, very much so.

*Q: It is an interesting?*

GREGG: Two of my favorite Korean stories come from the golf course. One, I had a beautiful young caddy who caddied for me every Tuesday morning, rain, sleet or snow. I remember one sleeting morning we were out playing golf and my eyes were watering and my nose was running, and my glasses were just in fog, and she stood there looking as she had just stepped out of a band box. I said to her, "Miss Kim, why is my nose running and yours isn't?" She said, "Because your nose is so big and mine is so small."

Then the second one was when I was ambassador, and we were playing. This was a beautiful spring morning. We teed off at the crack of dawn, and there was still a moon very visible in the sky. I turned to this caddy who was 50 years old and plain as a mud fence and I said, "Oh, that moon makes me feel very romantic." She said, "Okay with me but what will your wife say?" So anyway, but no, I got to know a lot of the military people. General Kung who later became prime minister, was one of my close friends.



## Library of Congress

*Q: Were we concerned at the time that the military might try playing games with a naval maneuver? You know what I mean, the naval aspect was always rather dangerous. I mean the North Koreans would come down. I don't know if they had any during this first period, if they had any submarine incursions.*

GREGG: Yes, there was the Pydo island an extension of the MLL out there, a very complicated piece of water. That was one of the more amusing things because we learned that the Korean navy had acquired a midget submarine from I think it was Germany. They weren't supposed to have any submarines. I went to the admiral who was in charge of our naval forces. His name was Henry Morgan, wonderful name for an admiral. I said, "Well, let's figure out a way to get the South Koreans to tell you that they have this submarine." I said, "I'll let you know when they are going to exercise it, and you can launch several American aircraft, and then you are obligated to tell the South Koreans that you have spotted an unidentified submarine, and since the South Koreans don't have any submarines, it must be a North Korean submarine, and you are about to attack it." So that is what we did.

*Q: I was just wondering, being part of the diplomatic community, did you get involved, how were your relations with the consular people for visas, because this is what I was in charge of when I was there some time later?*

GREGG: I didn't really get involved in that. When I was ambassador, I prided myself on issuing visas in Pusan, and we got rid of the lines around the embassy. Then an inspection came just after I left and brought it all to a halt. Ed Wilkinson was my?

Q: Yes.

GREGG: But there had been a man, very suspect, Andy Antippas, who left a very bad reputation behind.

## Library of Congress

*Q: Well the whole situation is very dicey. I used to worry quite a bit about the corruption aspect. Well let's move on, quickly, what did you do between '75 and '89?*

GREGG: I went back to CIA and was put in charge of, I was sort of the thrusting point for the Pike investigation of the agency that Senator Church was leading a Senate investigation.

*Q: Another of our Williams classmates, Bill Miller was much involved with that.*

GREGG: I got to know Bill. That was a very difficult job because Pike had really charged his people with bringing the agency to heel. I learned three things that I hadn't known before. We had tried to kill Castro. We had reached out to the Mafia to try to get them to kill Castro, and that we had done some drug testing on some unwitting people. I thought those were all extremely unfortunate. I was shocked by it, but on the whole, what came out was all right.

Colby had already pulled together what he called the family jewels. He asked everybody to report anything that they knew that the agency had done which they felt was bad. Church and Pike soon learned that these papers existed and so they were turned over. This caused an irreparable split between Colby and Dick Helms. Helms felt that if those were given over, that this would increase congressional oversight to the point where we would really be out of the covert action business. Colby felt that if he didn't turn them over, the agency essentially would be shut down. I think they both were right. But it just was a watershed.

Then my career fell on difficult days because Jimmy Carter brought Admiral Stansfield Turner in as director, an Amherst man which was part of his problem. A Christian Scientist and a moralist, and a believer that scientific SIGINT and satellites could do the intelligence job antiseptically and that it was people like me who had always gotten the agency in trouble. So I was put up for several of the top jobs in the operations directory and got

## Library of Congress

none of them. My career really went sideways. I was about to become national intelligence officer for Asia, a job which I would have liked, when I was suddenly offered a chance to go to the National Security Council staff at the White House, because a man named Sam Hoskinson had gotten fed up with Jimmy Carter and quit. They needed an Asian specialist there, and somebody put my name into the hopper. I went and interviewed with Brzezinski and was given the job. So I worked at the White House for the last 18 months of the Carter administration, and was one of I think only two people who made the transition from Carter to Reagan. The only reason I survived was that I was from CIA.

The Reaganauts came into the White House sort of like the Visigoths at the sack of Rome. The Carter people had fled writing graffiti on their desk blotters. It was a very unpleasant turnover. I was in charge of Asian policy and intelligence at the NSC.

I got to know George Herbert Walker Bush there. I had met him when he was a congressman, but I had never seen him as director. He asked me to become his National Security Advisor.

*Q: Well while we are on this, on the Far Eastern policy, was there a different thrust to the, from the latter part of the Carter era to the early part of the Reagan era? I mean knowing Latin America there was sort of an earth change, but after the dust had settled, was there much of a difference in policy for other regions?*

GREGG: Well, during the Carter Administration I think that probably the American ambassador who had the most difficult tour of anyone I could think of is Bill Weinstein who has written a book about this, because Jimmy Carter wanted to pull all our troops out of South Korea. This was regarded as a mistake by other neighboring countries.

*Q: All of us. I mean I was in the embassy at the time, and you know, we were horrified.*

GREGG: So that came to a halt with Reagan. The first foreign visitor or chief of state that Reagan had was Chun Doo-hwan. The price of that visit was Kim Dae Jung's life. He had

## Library of Congress

been sentenced to death for, what is the word I am groping for? Sedition, treason. I had gone out with Secretary of defense Brown to talk with Chun Doo-hwan about Kim Dae Jung. Brown said, "I don't think Chun Doo-hwan is going to bring Kim Dae Jung up." I said, "Oh I think he will, Mr. Secretary." It was the first thing that Chun brought up when we went to see him. I have a hell of a problem with Kim Dae Jung," he said. "Every single general in my army wants him dead. Most of the Korean people want him dead. I know that you don't want me to kill him. I know that if I do kill him, I am going to have a problem with you, so it is a real problem for me."

The only thing that we told him that made any sort of impression on him was that we knew the North Koreans were preparing a tremendous propaganda exploitation of this. I told him that. Richard Allen who was Reagan's first National Security Advisor picked up the ball. Chun wanted desperately to be legitimized by a visit to the White House. So the trade off was if he saw Reagan, Kim Dae Jung would be, his life would be spared. That was the trade off. We did everything we could to downplay the visit. We had a lunch rather than a dinner. We used all these diplomatic niceties, but Reagan was such a courteous person, you know there was a picture with his arm around Chun, and Chun got what he wanted.

*Q: Well then, when you worked for Bush, what were you doing with Bush?*

GREGG: I was his national security advisor. I started every day with him, reading the President's daily brief. I arranged who got to see him from what countries. I went to 65 countries with him in the 6 # years I worked for him, and wrote hundreds of papers giving him my suggestions on how our policy ought to be implemented, international.

*Q: What was your reading of him in the international world?*

GREGG: Superb. Absolutely superb. I have huge respect and admiration for him. I saw him deal with everybody from Margaret Thatcher to Deng Xiaoping to Mitterrand to

## Library of Congress

Gorbachev. He was superb. His son is a completely different breed of cat. I voted for him, and I am extremely uncomfortable with that vote.

*Q: I have to say that I see a great deal of the retired foreign service community in doing what I do, and George W. Bush, you know, I really don't find any support for him within this community, which is normally split. We are going through a very difficult patch I think.*

GREGG: I think it is going to be a riveting campaign.

*Q: I do too.*

GREGG: So anyway, after 6 # years with Bush, I got splattered by the Iran-Contra affair. People thought here is a CIA guy in the White House. It is too complicated to go into. I rode it out. I am the only person who was involved in that to seek a job that required Senate confirmation. That was a very tough go, but I got through. I have, Bush to this day, he said, "Thank you. You took the heat for all of us." That was somewhat of a vindication.

*Q: You were appointed by George Herbert Walker Bush?*

GREGG: To be ambassador.

*Q: To be ambassador. How did that come about? Did he ask?*

GREGG: Yes. He asked me. He said, you know because of the Iran-Contra business everyone was saying you ought to take Brent Scowcroft to be your security advisor. I said, yes. He is a role model that everybody has. I understood that completely. Bush had defended me during the Iran-Contra thing very well. So people knew that I had been to Korea. They knew I was an Asian specialist, so it was I think a very natural thing to do.

*Q: How did the preparations and the Senate hearing go?*

## Library of Congress

GREGG: There was a long delay, and Senator Cranston had a man on his staff who devoted I think six months of his life to defeating my nomination. I have my hearings taped. I am very proud of them. It started out with Cranston dumping on me for 45 minutes. It was sort of like lying at the foot of Niagara Falls looking upward. You know, I was there by myself. I didn't have a lawyer. I didn't have anybody. I was all by myself, and just began to climb up the rope slowly hand over hand, just dealing with the questions and accusations and so forth. I finally got through in September.

*Q: Was the questioning, was it just Cranston or was this you had to make political points?*

GREGG: Yes, I think so, and to try to embarrass Bush. You know, it was very partisan. My children were all there. The man who leapt to my defense was Senator Helms, a man for whom I have a great many doubts. But it was a very interesting experience.

*Q: During that experience you are always on the tightrope aren't you that you don't screw up your relations with the country you are going to, saying something that might help the Senate but it is not going to help you?*

GREGG: There was no questioning about Korea. The questioning was all about my fitness to be ambassador because the feeling was I had deceived people because of the Iran Contra business.

*Q: Well then you arrived in Korea September '89, and you were there until February of '93, basically the length of the Bush administration. What were the issues you felt you had to deal with when you went out there?*

GREGG: Well the first issue I dealt with was the fact that we had nuclear weapons in South Korea. We had a nuclear inspection; an annual team came out to make sure that they were stored safely because something awful had happened in Spain or something. They had to report to me when they had finished. Everything was fine, but I said, "Why did this process start." They told me what had happened in Spain and how difficult that was.

## Library of Congress

I realized, South Korea was already embarked on what they called nordpolitik (Northern Policy). It was based on Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik. The government of South Korea was establishing relations with all of North Korea's friends and allies. They were moving toward an attempt to reach out to North Korea.

*Q: By this time China and South Korea had relations.*

GREGG: No, they were established in September of 1992. So we also were beginning to have suspicions about what was going on at Yongbyon, the North Korean's nuclear interest. So, I thought, my god, if we had nuclear weapons in the South, that is going to become an immediate issue. We will never take them out under pressure. It will become an issue for students in the South. It will become a sticking point with the North.

I went to USFK (U.S. Forces Korea) and asked, "Why are these here?" "Well they have always been here." I said, "Are they of any utility to you?" They said, "No." So I went to President Roh Tae Woo's national security advisor, a man to whom I was very close, and I said, "I think we ought to get them out of here." So it took some doing because it was part of the security blanket, but I was able to send in October of 1990, a message with the full support of the Blue House and USFK, I recommend we remove our nuclear weapons from South Korea. I had one brief message back from Dick Solomon who was assistant secretary at State. He said, "You will never know how helpful your message was." About a year later President Bush announced that we were pulling nuclear weapons back from all over the world. In Korea we went through a little dance because we had the "neither confirm nor deny" policy about whether we had nuclear weapons. But we worked out something where President Roh would say there are no nuclear weapons on Korean soil and the White House said we have no reason to object to that statement by President Roh. That is one of the best things I did.

*Q: Had these nuclear weapons been something to which the South Korean government kind of hugged to their chest?*

## Library of Congress

GREGG: Sure. But it was just part of the security blanket. But the relationship was closer. The sophistication of the relationship was greater. I made the point, look if you need nuclear weapons, they can be had in spades. But having these obsolescent things sitting in Osan was just an irritant.

*Q: Well at that time I think I remember General Chapman back when I was there in '76-'79, that every time they did war games, they found that the North got into Seoul and all this, and they at the last day of the games they would call in massive air power to stop it. Had the balance changed by the time you were there?*

GREGG: It was still iffy. That was the first thing that I asked when I got there. When I left it was very tenuous. The reading at that point was, if we had good weather, we can get air power deployed quickly enough and in large enough numbers to probably keep them out of Seoul. But if we have bad weather it still was doubtful whether we could hold Seoul. The problem of getting the people of Seoul across the Han River was just incredible. So it was still a very touchy defense scenario.

*Q: Well how about on the economic side. Much had been made of Park Chung Hee's legacy that he had set up a strong economic base there including doing things for the farmers which hardly anybody else had ever done in any other country, that is give them a living recompense for staying and growing rice and other things.*

GREGG: Well, that became a major problem because the price of Korean rice was sky high, just because of the subsidies, and yet there was a tremendous emotional sentimental attachment on the part of the Korean people to their grandma on the farm. Carla Hills who was the Special Trade Representative came out and was pushing for us to let more beef in and rice in and so forth. One of them said, "Well why are you doing this? If the prices are lowered, and the markets are opened up, it is going to be the Australians that are going to sell us the beef, not you, and somebody else will sell the rice." Carla said, "We know that. We are not arguing for unilateral advantage. We are talking about freer trade."



## Library of Congress

It was shortly after her visit that six students vaulted over the wall of the residence and got into the residence and tried to set fire to it. My wife and I were in our bedroom. They tried the door once but did not try to break in. It took some time for the Korean cops to get themselves organized to rout them out. I didn't feel under any particular threat. I have had people come after me with real malice aforethought, and that was not the case here. These kids I think, were surprised at how easy it was to get into the house. So they were eventually routed out. They did about \$35,000 worth of damage to the furnishings.

*Q: What were they after?*

GREGG: Protesting the opening up of the beef quotas. You know, they were making a demonstration. Who knows what they were after. It was actually a very good way to start a tour as ambassador because we behaved rather well. My wife in particular was very gracious. We were on television. We thanked the Korean police who actually had done a lousy job, but we praised them. The Koreans were deeply embarrassed, but we had behaved well, and actually it was a very good way to start a tour. But it showed me just how sensitive these economic issues were, particularly when farmers were concerned.

*Q: Well, what was your role in the trade issue?*

GREGG: I was probably the most active of any ambassador that had been there in terms of trying to sell American products. I had a very favorable article in the Wall Street Journal written when I left saying that nobody had ever done that in Korea. I enjoyed it. I worked very closely with the Foreign Commercial Service.

Another high point of my tour was a fight between Lockheed and the French on anti-submarine warfare planes. This was fascinating because Lockheed offered the P-3 aircraft, the Neptune, and the French were trying to sell the Atlantique. So Lockheed was in some trouble, and they came to me and said, "We really need to keep this going. What can you do?" I did not use CIA on this because I don't like economic espionage, so I went

## Library of Congress

to the defense attach# and said, "We don't know what price the French are willing to sell their aircraft for. Can you find that out?" So he found that out. I went back to Lockheed with that. They lowered their price. But the sale was still going to the French. I had gotten to know the minister of defense quite well. I played golf with him, so I asked to see him. I said, "Mr. Minister, you know how interested we are in this sale of Lockheed aircraft. There has been a price adjustment and the Lockheed price is now lower than the French price. But I don't think you know that because I don't think your office has been made aware of that." Dick Christiansen was in the room with me. He is now DCM in Tokyo, absolutely fluent in Korean. He passed a note to me saying the interpreter is not interpreting what I was saying. So I again repeated this. I looked at Dick, and he shook his head. I then thanked the minister for the meeting and said I would like to see you once more before you make your final decision. That was interpreted and he said, "Yes, please." I requested to see him and said, "I would like to use my interpreter at this meeting if you don't mind." He said, "Fine." So we went and I said exactly the same thing. This time it went through. He went right through the ceiling, called a halt, called a review, and the bid went to Lockheed. I was paraded down the assembly line in Marietta, Georgia, one time when I was in that area where they were still very pleased. The French were furious. They never spoke to me again.

*Q: I mean you know, to get to the interpreter, I mean other things. It looks like a lot of people were in on the deal.*

GREGG: Well I don't think the interpreter was. It was just what I was saying was so embarrassing. That was Dick's interpretation. He didn't think the interpreter had been bought off. But certainly some people down below had been bought off.

*Q: It does show some of the problems with interpreters. You are not getting your? The president while you were there was?*

GREGG: Roh Tae Woo?

## Library of Congress

*Q: How did you find him?*

GREGG: I liked him. He loved to play tennis. I arranged for him to play tennis with President Bush. We, unlike the Japanese who always have it Japan against the United States, we teamed the two president's up as partners, and the opponents including me could make career enhancing decisions as to who won the match. I liked him very much. We helped him. We introduced him to Gorbachev in San Francisco on 1990. We helped get the Chinese to drop their opposition to both North and South Korea joining the UN. He and I were real buddies. He would ask me to come and play tennis at Blue House quite frequently, and also golf.

*Q: These tennis and golf things, business could be conducted there.*

GREGG: Oh absolutely.

*Q: What was sort of the internal situation in Korea at that time?*

GREGG: Well the real political watershed I think, had taken place during Jim Lilley's time where there had been an agreement to have the president elected by a direct vote of the people instead of the rigged system that had been put in place by Park Chung Hee. So Roh Tae Woo had been elected because he had run against both Kim Dae Jung, and Kim Yung San, and there had been a three way split, and he I think got something like 40% of the vote, but he was still in. So he was still regarded as a military figure but he was much less authoritarian than Chun Doo-hwan had been or Park Chung Hee, and conducted I thought, a very sophisticated diplomacy. During my time, when I came I think Hungary was the only eastern bloc country to be represented. When I left, everybody was represented in Seoul.

*Q: How did the Chinese recognition go? I mean was this difficult for the Korean side or the Chinese side?*

## Library of Congress

GREGG: It was from the Chinese side because the North Koreans felt that as a tremendous betrayal. The Chinese ambassador came to see me immediately after he arrived, and we had a fascinating talk. He had spent 15 years at Pyongyang, so he knew the North Koreans very well. He had been with Kim Il Sung when Kim played his last visit to China in 1991, and Ceausescu of Romania had already been killed after having tried to bring?

*Q: This was the '89 uprising.*

GREGG: Right. Ceausescu had been one of the few people that Kim Il Sung had maintained a bit of an interesting relationship. The Chinese ambassador said that Kim Il Sung was very worried about what had happened to Ceausescu, and had said to the Chinese, "I realize that I have to make some changes in North Korea, what is your advice, because he mentioned the situation in Romania." The Chinese said, "Well do what we do. Keep political control at the center but set up some special economic zones at the periphery where you can have special rules and use them to attract foreign investment. So Kim Il Sung began to move in that direction. He set up a special economic zone way up north in Rajin-Sonbong. It was doomed to failure because it was essentially a dusty parking lot surrounded by barbed wire by a polluted river. It was inaccessible. Nobody wanted to go there. But that is where he really started to try to move to new directions.

*Q: When the Chinese came in, did they, were they pretty cautious? Did they feel that this was hostile territory? How were they received?*

GREGG: Oh they were received very well, because the Russians or the Soviets had already recognized the South. By that time it was very clear that the South had outstripped the North economically. I think the Chinese saw real opportunity to begin mutually beneficial trade relations with the South Koreans, which they have done.

*Q: Had there been trade relations with China before hand.*

## Library of Congress

GREGG: There had been some, yes.

*Q: Going sort of through Hong Kong.*

GREGG: Well, they had a boat from Qingdao to Inchon that had started when I left, a ferry boat. Yes, there was some trade.

*Q: Did the Chinese community play any role, I mean there was a small Chinese community.*

GREGG: No. Taiwan had been there for years, and they had to leave. What community there was was more or less in the Taiwan camp I guess, but it is not a significant factor.

*Q: Did you get involved with the two Kims?*

GREGG: Kim Dae Jung, and Kim Yung San? Yes, I did. Kim Dae Jung was very much aware of the fact that twice I had been involved in keeping him alive, so he was very friendly to me. Kim Yung San, I always found very unimpressive. Not very intelligent. But he would ask to see me, and we would have long dull dinners. But he was elected president just before I left. Dae Jung and I saw a fair amount of each other. I felt one of the things I wanted to do was to go down to Kwangju where there was tremendous anti U.S. feeling because of the supposition on the part of the people of Kwangju that we had supported the horrible suppression of things there. Kim Dae Jung helped me set that up.

*Q: How did that go?*

GREGG: It went tremendously well. It was very controversial. Kim Dae Jung said, "If you are going to go, go in the winter during Christmas vacation when the university isn't open, and so I planned to do that January of 1990, and the day before I was supposed to go, Kim Dae Jung called me up and said, "Don't go, it is too dangerous. There is a kidnap threat." The national police was aware of this, so I called a country team meeting, and

## Library of Congress

said, "You know there is this. I have the feeling that I really ought to go. What do you think?"

The country team was split right down the middle. So I decided I would go. I left a memo in my safe saying if something happens to me, it is purely my fault. So off I went, and I arrived, and the press along with a huge bodyguard of police. The press was saying have you come to apologize for Kwangju? I said, "No, we have nothing to apologize for. I have come because we have a cultural center there that is being firebombed, and I want to find out why there is such resentment of us." So I spent two full days talking to everybody. I had been to Hungary once, and it was long after the uprising of 1956, but there was sort of a feeling of betrayal on the part of the people of Kwangju. On the morning of the third day the press came again and said, "Have you come to apologize about Kwangju?" I said, "Yes, I found we do have something to apologize for, and that is we have kept silent for too long." That made an impact, and so the people who had been firebombing our?been organizing the opposition agreed to see me. I had been trying to see them and they refused. So I canceled my return flight, and I had about 3 # hours with about six of these guys. It was absolutely fascinating. At first they wanted to meet in secret, and then they decided they wanted to have television. So we met in front of the television and newspaper people.

The first question was who gave the order to shoot in the streets of Kwangju? I said, "I have no idea. It was a Korean decision and a Korean order, and it is only Koreans who know." He said, "That's a lie, because we know you have satellites that can look down from the sky and you can read a newspaper from the sky and were watching, and you know who gave the order." I said, "Well we do have those satellites, but they don't take you inside a man's head. We don't know who gave the order." Then they said, "Do you take us as a nation of field rats because the general in charge said there is a certain lemming like quality in Korea." This had not gone over well. I said, "Absolutely not. I have huge admiration for the Korean people. That is why I have come back in this capacity." Then they said, "Well, we thought you were going to save us." I said, "What made you think

## Library of Congress

that?" Well you sent an aircraft carrier to Pusan." "That was a signal to the North Koreans not to get involved."

They said, "We know you supported Chung Doo-hwan because he was the first man to visit President Reagan. We know you supported what he did here because you were so close to him." I said, "Did you know the price of his visit was Kim Dae Jung's life?" That had been said in Washington; it had been said in Seoul, but it had never been said in Kwangju. It caused a sensation. So after about three hours, they said, "Well we don't have any more questions. We thank you for coming. Some of your answers have not been good, but some have been helpful, and we thank you for coming."

The interpreter I had, who was a superb young woman, whispered to me, she had just done a magnificent job and really removed the language barrier. She said they are terribly afraid they are all going to be arrested after this because the police are after them. I said, "Thanks for telling me." So I went out, it was raining, and the cops were surrounding the place as they had and tear gas had been needed to flush some people out at times. So I put my arms around two of these guys and I went up to the very tough policeman who had been my chief bodyguard and said, "You are not to touch these people. You are to let them go." He sort of could hardly believe. I said, "I mean it. I don't want you to touch these people." So he barked an order and the cordon gap opened up, and as they passed through each one was either kicked or pushed out into the darkness. One of them turned and waved as he went.

The fire bombings of our cultural center stopped. We moved to a new place and were able to stay until budgetary? I went four times to Kwangju. I went with the German ambassador, and we talked about the German implications for eventual North-South reunification. I went down with the first Russian ambassador, and we talked about the Russian view of the Korean Peninsula. I consider those visits to be among the most interesting visits of my life. In fact it made me feel quite at home when I went to North Korea because I felt the same kind of resentment in the North that I had felt in Kwangju. I saw it evaporate as the North

## Library of Congress

Koreans found I was taking them seriously and trying to answer their questions in good spirit.

*Q: Did you see the rise of anti Americanism? Had we just in a way, some of these things have outrun their time or something.*

GREGG: I was never in 3 # years ever able to make a publicized appearance on a college campus. I was invited frequently to make appearances. I would always accept. The word would get out that I was coming, and the campus activists would say "Don't let Gregg come or we will burn the campus down." So the invitation would be canceled. I got an honorary degree from the Jesuit University there, Sogan, and they gave it to me at night on Christmas vacation. So there was still a lot of that. There were riots around the embassy frequently. So it was still there. It subsided I think, later on, after I had gone. Particularly after first Kim Yung San and then Kim Dae Jung, these were the opposition leaders. The politics were getting freed up. The military was out of politics, so that had removed one source of tension.

But the Koreans had tremendous historical memory, and they remembered the Taft-Katsura Agreement, which not one American in a million is aware of. I just learned that the 1919 demonstration against the Japanese had been inspired by Wilson's 14 points. The Koreans felt the United States would come to their aid. There was a demonstration of Korean unhappiness with the Japanese occupation. We didn't do that. Then there was the division of the country in 1950 that was resented, and the fact that Truman would not fight to go up to the Yalu and reunite the whole country. So there are all of those underlying resentments which never were really fully cleared up.

*Q: Well were you involved at that time particularly because of the fall of East Germany and all that, in looking at the problem of a collapse in the North and the soft landing and the hard landing and all that. Could you talk a bit about what the thinking was at that time?*



## Library of Congress

GREGG: It really didn't start until I had left. Willy Brandt made his only visit to Korea while I was there in October of '89. I was a great admirer of Willy Brandt, and I saw a good deal of him on his visit. He went up to the DMZ, and I had dinner with him when he came back from the DMZ. He said, "That is the most appalling thing I have ever seen. It is a time warp. I am sure that when that DMZ is penetrated, you will find that the psychological dislocations behind it are going to be much more difficult to deal with than what we will cope with when the Berlin wall comes down." He said, "We hate the Berlin wall. We draw graffiti on it and so forth, but there are gates through it, and people pass back and forth and radio works and television works and so forth, but the DMZ is a time warp." The Koreans said, "Well when do you think the Berlin wall will come down." Brandt said, "Not in my lifetime."

*Q: This was in '89.*

GREGG: Within 60 days it was down. So I think that there was a feeling that unification was going to take place. It was really after I left that they began to try to quantify what that would cost. The feeling was the cost to South Korea would just be more than they could handle. As I say, one of the few things that North and South Korea agree on is that they want whatever process occurs to be a gradual one. I think that is still true.

*Q: This is tape two side one, with Don Gregg. Don, what about within Korea the, I can't remember the name for it, but the big industrial?*

GREGG: Chaebol.

*Q: Chaebol. How did you view them at the time, and what were our concerns and their influence?*

GREGG: Well, they had been tremendously successful. Park Chung Hee had appointed some very talented men. General Park Dae Jung said, I want you to build a world class steel plant. I will give you land; I will give you loans; I will give you all the help you need.

## Library of Congress

So as a result, Korea is either the first or second largest producer of steel to this day. Chung Se Yung of Hyundai got started, a magnificent man, building ships, building cars, now into microchips. They were given free reign, preferential loans. Laws were passed if they needed to be passed, or pass the regulations just to allow them to grow very quickly. So, you had figures on the landscape, Chung Se Yung of Hyundai, Kim Dae Jung of Daewoo were the two. B.C. Lee of Samsung. These were men who were more or less laws unto themselves. The thought of their collapsing was almost unthinkable at that point. We felt that we wanted a better deal in terms of access for agriculture, that kind of thing, but it was later on, particularly in terms of automobile production that some of them just went off the rails. Daewoo is now essentially defunct. Even Samsung had an ill conceived venture into the automobile business. The banks were weak. Everybody was concerned with market share, not profitability. There has been I think, triggered by the 1997 economic turndown, there has been a real turnaround in the Korean market toward more transparency, and a more profit driven system. I think they are doing very well.

*Q: Was there a corruption factor in all of this?*

GREGG: Yes, there was. There were always rumors for payoffs for some of the big military purchases. It was very hard to pin down. The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, the American business community used to complain about it because they always talked about a tilted playing field. Everybody else pays off, but we are not allowed to and so forth. I would just say, "Look, one of the things the United States stands for is not doing that, and just keep at it." That is one of the reasons that I became as active as I was in going to trade fairs and pushing American products. I felt that for Korea really to get over the top as an economic entity of continuing viability, they have to move away from the Chaebol oriented, corruption ridden closed kind of economic society where if you didn't pay off, you weren't going to get anywhere.

*Q: Well how about Congress? When I was there, I took Tongsun Park's visa oath and I think Robert Giuliani, a Giuliani anyway came and was taking a deposition from him. This*

## Library of Congress

*is back in '76 I think or something. You know we had congressmen who, they would arrive and not even talk to the embassy, come and get measured for suits, and young ladies would appear to serve as handmaidens or something. Was that still going on?*

GREGG: It wasn't as bad as it was in the 70's. I think that Lester Wolf was one of the guys that appeared all of the time back then. There were a number of them. But it was less, much less when I was there as ambassador.

*Q: Did you find, was there much congressional interest in what you were doing there?*

GREGG: Not that I remember. Jim Baker was Secretary of State, and he had four or five issues that he paid a great deal of attention to, and one of them was not Korea. So I had the ability to take a lot of initiative, as I did. I never really remember having to take congressional concerns into much consideration. Maybe I have forgotten, but it wasn't a big?

*Q: Well reverberations from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the whole thing, did they filter down much to South Korea, or were they insulated from this?*

GREGG: They were pretty much insulated. I mean it was seen as because we had moved so quickly to get Roh Tae Woo in touch with Gorbachev, and they sent a very able man as ambassador quickly after the collapse. I think the South Koreans just saw the collapse of the Soviet Union and their recognition by China as indications of their growing success and their growing stature.

*Q: How about Tiananmen Square, this is in '89. I mean this reverberated certainly in the United States.*

GREGG: Well you know, no. The Koreans are tough, and they have been looking down the muzzles of North Korean artillery for 50 years, and it really takes a lot to shake them.

## Library of Congress

*Q: Were you, speaking of the North Korean threat, how did you feel about the North Korean threat when you came back? I mean was the thought of a lunge south, I mean did it make sense in the North Korean context at this time?*

GREGG: No it really didn't. Our ability to defend Seoul had improved, as I say it depended on good weather. But the military balance was much more favorable. It was recognized that the North Korean air force wasn't exercising much. Their equipment was getting old, that they didn't have the economic power to maintain a massive invasion. Then as now, it was easy to inflict tremendous damage on Seoul via their artillery was the main threat. I think my feeling was that it, they were not irrational. This wasn't a really very likely event. Now it became very much more dangerous after I left in 1994.

*Q: What about, I think it was called South Pos?. We had a very large American community, military community right in the heart of Seoul on the wrong side of the Han River. Was that, were we concerned about that?*

GREGG: We were concerned about it in terms of our relations with South Korea. It was as though we still had a British base in New York City's Central Park. Jim Lilley had really embarrassed the military about their golf course right in the middle of Seoul. I played the last round on that golf course, and we shut it down. They built us another course south of the city, not nearly as convenient, but at least we turned the golf course over, and it is now used as a park. We talked at that time, they wanted access to the base at Yongsan. We said, yes, we are willing to move, but you have to pay for it. The cost at that time of moving us down to Osan or Suwan or whatever was 4-6 billion dollars. The Koreans didn't want to cough up that much money. So that has been an issue for some time.

*Q: Were E&E, I mean emergency evacuation plans always?*

GREGG: No, that was really not. My successor Jim Laney, was about to declare that the evacuation of all non-essential personnel, which is sort of the last thing you do before you

## Library of Congress

expect a war to start. That was headed off by Jimmy Carter's visit, but not during my time we didn't talk about that.

*Q: With the arrival of the Chinese and then the Soviet and then Russian embassies, were you able to get a little better picture of North Korea?*

GREGG: Yes we were. Also during my time, the South Koreans had the prime minister level exchanges with the North Koreans, and they signed in early '92, an agreement that still isn't a very good blueprint for the way relations between North and South Korea have been developed. The national security advisor to President Roh Tae Woo said to me when I was about to leave, "If we could have kept everybody in the United States and South Korea and North Korea in place for one more year, I think we could have solved the North-South issue.

*Q: Well Kim Il Sung, was he alive when you left?*

GREGG: Yes.

*Q: Was he a failing force?*

GREGG: No. It was recognized. I mean I have told you what the Chinese ambassador told me about his mind set. Billy Graham had gone to North Korea on two occasions, and Kim Il Sung had said, "You know, I really want to make friends with the United States." That didn't seem to have much impact. But the power shortages in the North were becoming very noticeable because there is no longer concessional aid from the Soviet Union, and the weakness of the economy was noticeable. The trains in the north ran very slowly because the electric power was so weak. There was a general recognition that the North's economy was imploding. That it was already reports of food shortages; that the feeling was the North really needed to change the way it was doing, changing its economic approach. But that was headed off by the reinstitution of Team Spirit, a sort of a reinforcing of exercise that the North Koreans hated. It brought thousands of U.S. troops in from

## Library of Congress

abroad, and it was sort of a symbolic demonstration of our willingness to come to the aid of South Korea if there was a North Korean invasion. The North Korean alert level was always way up when we did that. I canceled it for one year, and that paved the way for a lot more talks. But it was reinstated without my knowledge.

*Q: Well you say it was re-started without your knowledge, while you were still ambassador?*

GREGG: Yes, the decision was made in the fall of 1992.

*Q: Was this sort of you know, business as usual in the Pentagon, or was this?*

GREGG: I think it was business as usual in the Pentagon. It was also some hard line South Korean generals who sort of saw Team Spirit as sort of a reassertion of the security blanket. They were very suspicious of talks with the North.

*Q: Well you left there when?*

GREGG: In the end of February '93.

*Q: When you left, how were things at that time?*

GREGG: Kim Yung Son had just been sworn in. He was talking about Seigewa, globalization. That was his big thing. He was talking about more economic development. I thought things were good. I think I probably had as easy a time as any ambassador in the post war period.

*Q: Had the computer Internet revolution sort of hit Korea? I think it would be a natural for it later on.*

GREGG: No it hadn't.

## Library of Congress

*Q: Well you got involved in Korea again afterwards didn't you?*

GREGG: Yes. I still am. I had talked to the Koreans about the fact that they never had an organization in the United States really dedicated to all facets of the U.S.-Korean relationship. They had tried to do it through Tongsun Pak, which had failed. This had caused them really to draw back. They established something called the Korea Foundation which is going around endowing chairs and various universities. I said, "You need to have somebody in the United States, somebody with some stature who really develops an organization devoted to the Korean-American relationship." At that point I thought that George Herbert Walker Bush was going to be re-elected. I had some hopes of going to be ambassador to Japan. He lost, and that brought my government career to a halt. So I was offered the job as chairman of the Korean Society, and having said what I said to the South Koreans, I could hardly turn it down. So it turned out to be a very stimulating difficult job.

*Q: What is difficult about it?*

GREGG: The non-profit world is much more competitive and cut throat than I thought it would be. I have been sued by an African-American employee whom I dismissed for non performance. He is in California. I have dealt with corruption, embezzlement. Managing a Korean organization is in a way like herding cats. But when I took the organization over, it had a net worth of less than \$200,000. We now have an endowment of \$8.5 million. We have enlarged our office space three or four times. We have a very active program involving business development, involving cultural exchanges, involving political discussions. I continue to enjoy it.

*Q: What about the, you have been involved in some business with North Korea haven't you?*

GREGG: Yes.

## Library of Congress

*Q: What would you like to say about those?*

GREGG: Well, Kim Dae Jung had a completely different attitude toward North Korea than Kim Yung San. I invited, I helped pay for the visit of two North Koreans to New York in '95 or '96, something like that. Kim Yung San people never forgave me for that. I was encouraging subversion in their view which is ridiculous. But Kim Dae Jung said to me, "Please try to plant the flag of the Korea Society in North Korea." So I began to pursue the North Koreans in New York. They have a mission there at the UN. I invited the ambassador out to my home with some of his staff. Introduced them to American businessmen who had an interest in perhaps investing in North Korea. We were approached by Syracuse University who had an IT training program with the former Soviet Union.

*Q: IT?*

GREGG: Information technology. They said, "Do you think the North Koreans would be interested?" I said, "Yes, I think they would." So we funded an exchange program between Syracuse University and Kim Chaek University of Technology in Pyongyang, which is going very well. The Clinton administration was very open to me. They invited me down to try to assess the Jimmy Carter visit, because they didn't really know what to make of it.

*Q: The Jimmy Carter visit being what?*

GREGG: Well he went to see Kim Il Sung in 1994 at a point where we were about to pull out of our [inaudible]. People we were getting ready to re-enforce. The North Koreans said, "We will turn Seoul into a sea of fire." They pulled out of the non- proliferation treaty. I think next to the Cuban missile crisis, this was the second most dangerous moment in the post cold war era. Jim Laney who had been the former president of Emory University, and very close to Jimmy Carter, knew that Carter had a standing invitation to go to North Korea. Laney got hold of Carter and said, "I think you ought to go." Carter said, "Well I



## Library of Congress

am not sure how the White House would feel about it.” Warren Christopher was dead set against it, Secretary of State, feeling that that usurped his rule. But Gore was for it, and so Carter was given permission to go. He went to see Kim Il Sung. Kim Il Sung said to him what he said to Billy Graham. I want to be friends with the United States. If you are concerned about my nuclear program, I will turn it down as long as you build some replacement power generating things and give me oil in the interim for the power that I lose for shutting down my nuclear reactor. That was the genesis of the 1994 agreement. They called me to the White House when Carter was still on his trip and said, “What do you make of it?” Bill Clinton was there. I said, “All I can say is Carter had a man there with him,” Dick Christiansen again, who had helped me on the trade negotiations, “who is absolutely fluent in Korean. So there is absolutely no doubt about what was said by both sides, so that you will have a clear record of what was said if you want to look at it.” It isn't like Gerry Ford going to Poland with a poor quality interpreter and not knowing what was said.

*Q: “I just after Poland,” or something like that.*

GREGG: Something like that. So that worked. That led to the agreed framework established in 1994 where we with funding from South Korea and Japan were going to build two light water reactors in North Korea. That then, the relationship with the North wasn't going very well. I was part of a Council On Foreign Relations task force that recommended a senior person be put in charge of the relationship with North Korea. Again we had to wrestle the State Department to the ground. The assistant secretary felt he was doing a perfectly fine job. He wasn't doing a good job at all.

The former secretary of defense Bill Perry was appointed. He went to North Korea, and the issue was not only nuclear, but missiles. They had fired a multi stage rocket in 1998 that really rattled the Japanese cage. It was much more sophisticated than we thought they were capable of. So he went to the North and worked very closely in putting out a report saying what the North Koreans could expect from us if they stopped firing missiles

## Library of Congress

and shut down their nuclear program or maintain their nuclear program. So the demarche from Perry was considered by the North Koreans, finally accepted. They sent their Field Marshall Jo, Myung Yok, to Washington in October of 2000. He went to the White House in uniform, invited Bill Clinton to go to North Korea. He was given a dinner by Al Gore. The State Department sent Madeleine Albright to North Korea to check out the feasibility of a visit. In December of 2000, after the election, I was approached by the woman in charge of North Korean affairs for the State Department saying, "Do you think Bill Clinton should go to North Korea." That was Wendy Sherman. It was one on one. I said, "Well do you have a missile deal?" She said, "No, we cannot get the answer to two or three key questions." I said, "What are they?" She told me. I said, "Well I think what is happening is Kim Jong Il has the answers to these questions. If Clinton goes, he will get those answers, and he will be given a present for having gone." So she said, "Do you think we should go on that basis?" I said, "That is way above my pay grade. That is a decision only the President should make."

I think with the controversy about Florida and time ran out. But the North Koreans knew that he had come very close. Madeleine Albright, I have spoken with her at the University of Michigan. She is very entertaining on the subject. She said, "You know Kim Jong Il and I are about the same height. We both wear high heels and we both put mousse in our hair. But he is very intelligent. I had eleven hours of discussion with him, and we left a very good hand of cards on the table which the Bush administration has failed to pick up." So when Kim Dae Jung came to the United States pushing for an early meeting with Bush. It didn't go at all well because Bush said, "I don't trust Kim Jong Il. We are going to have a policy review before we do anything." He had referred to him as a pygmy, also we should have gotten out. So the policy review was held, and it revalidated the Kim Dae Jung sunshine policy, but it changed the agenda. Kim Dae Jung had structured his sunshine policy around the things that were the easiest to do first, leaving the hardest things for last.

*Q: Sort of confidence building.*

## Library of Congress

GREGG: That's right, and the Bush people moved the tough things right up to the front, which is troop disposition along the DMZ and so forth. So they laid out the basis on which they would resume contacting the North, and the North didn't respond, and then came 9-11. So then the North Koreans approached me in the fall of 2001 saying we are getting nowhere with the Bush administration. Why don't you come to North Korea and talk to us. I said, "I can't really anoint myself to do that. Why don't we figure out something better than that." So we agree to four former ambassadors were going to go, under the leadership of Bob Scalapino, an renowned orientalist from (University of California) Cal Berkeley who had been to North Korea before. It was going to be Jim Laney, Bill Gleysteen?

*Q: Jim Lilley?*

GREGG: No I don't think it was going to be Jim Lilley.

*Q: Dixie Walker?*

GREGG: No. Yes, Dixie Walker. So then we were planning to go in February of 2002, and then came Bush's State of the Union speech in which he made North Korea part of the axis of evil. That trip went down the drain. So I went to a conference in the UK on the future of Japan. This was at a place, not Ditchley, but a similar conference center run in part by the British Commonwealth office. Very good conferences. There were a number of Europeans there.

I was appalled at their attitude toward 9-11. Not the Brits, but the French, the Dutch, the Swedes, the Swiss, and their attitude was well now you know what we have been dealing with in terms of Bader Meinhof and the Red Brigade. You know, what is the big deal. Don't over react. What is so special about you. For them to lack any understanding of the impact of 9-11 on the United States, I thought my gosh, if these people don't understand where we are, there is no way in the world the North Koreans can know. So I felt motivated to write Kim Jong Il a letter saying that your weapons, missiles and nuclear matters have

## Library of Congress

become of huge concern to us because we have been attacked by people who would love to get their hands on the kinds of things you possess, and use them against us. That is why we are so concerned, and we really need to talk about this. It was about a three-page letter. I took it to one of the, a man named Lee Good who was the ambassador, the number two ambassador to the UN. He said to me, "How dare you write a letter like this to my chairman. Who do you think you are. Very Korean reaction." I said, "I am writing this letter to him because I think I understand how his mind works, and he needs to know this." He said, "How do you know how his mind works?" I said, "Well I have talked to George Toloroya who sat with him for several days on a train when he went to see Putin and had a long talk with him. I talked with Chinese who were with him when he visited a Buick plant in Beijing or in Shanghai. This is the kind of thing we have to do in North Korea. I have talked to Kim Dae Jung at great length about his visit with him, and I have talked to Madeleine Albright about her visit. They all add up to a very intelligent man who is trying to lead North Korea in some new directions." He said, "That is a good answer. I will send your letter."

So two weeks later I was invited to go. I had not asked permission. I had kept Rich Armitage informed, He is deputy secretary of state, an old friend. He sent me a perfect little note saying Don, thanks for your note. Keep me informed as you desire, blah, blah, Rich. Perfect. The State Department said, "Would you like to have a Korean speaking Foreign Service officer go along with you." I said, "I'd be delighted." So they sent a young woman who spoke fluent Korean, and so in we went.

In April of 2002 I had about 10 hours of discussion with Kim Le Gwan who was the leader of the North Korean delegation to the recently completed Beijing talks, and a very hard line general named Ree Chan Dok. My meeting with him is very reminiscent of my meetings in Kwangju.. It started out with the same bristling animosity, and ended up two hours later with saying exactly what they had said, "You have come a long way, and I appreciate your coming." We wound up understanding each other. He started out with me saying, "Why are you here? You speak first." I said, "Well, General, I am here because I think you

## Library of Congress

need to know what our frame of mind is. Yesterday I was taken up your Juche Tower," which is a tower about the height of the Washington Monument. "It is very impressive. How would you feel if you were looking out your window and saw one of your own aircraft fly into that monument reducing it to a pile of rubble and killing everybody on the plane. We say that twice in New York and once in Washington. How would you feel?" I just looked at him. He said, "I think you have lost sight of the fact that the real fighting spirit is in the heart of every soldier." I said, "I know that. The last thing we ever want is another war with you in Korea." He said, "It would be a disaster for you." I said, "Well look what we are accomplishing in Afghanistan without a single heavy artillery piece or heavy tank." He didn't like that. But we went on from there and you know, talked very frankly. As I say at the end of two hours we had developed a good deal of respect for each other.

I came back from that trip and wrote something that I sent to the White House recommending that somebody like Bill Perry be sent to North Korea. Well it was interesting. They said, Kim De Wan said, "Why is your George W. Bush so different from his father?" I said, "Well he is a Texan, and his father is a New Englander." "Why is W so different from Clinton?" I said, "Well you know in a democracy that happens. You have continuity of leadership, so you don't have to deal with that. Whereas sometimes there is a real turn. I watched one at close range from Carter to Reagan. Clinton to Bush is the same kind of thing." "So why don't you understand us better?" I said, "Well, I think because you are the longest running failure in the history of American espionage." I said, "We couldn't recruit you people. We could recruit Soviets; we could recruit Chinese." He sort of swelled with pride. Then this was funny. He said, "Are you wearing your Ops Center hat when you are saying that?" I said, "What?" He said, "You heard me. Are you wearing your Ops Center hat?" I said, "Are you referring to a very bad book by Tom Clancy?" He said, "Yes, of course." This is what my wife calls an airport only paperback written by Clancy and another guy named Steve Pieczenik called Op-Center. The leading character is called Gregory Dowell. He is former chief of station in Seoul and later ambassador. So it is clearly based on me. So I said, "Well I haven't read the book. My wife has. Would you

## Library of Congress

like her reaction?" "Yes." I said, "Well, she doesn't mind that I die an honorable death at the end of the book, but she hates the fact that I had a Korean mistress." That broke him all up. But I tell you that because it shows the sophistication of these people and the depth of their knowledge about us.

So anyway I suggested that there was great mystification as to why one president was so different from another. They realized they had almost had Jimmy Carter as a guest and now they were dealing with a man who referred to them as part of the axis of evil among other things. I said that you could recapture everything that Clinton had by sending somebody with a letter to the North Koreans. They are very anxious for a better relationship. You know, absolutely no response, no acknowledgment to that or anything else I sent to the White House on the subject.

*Q: Well do you sense that on this subject that there is a guiding hand? I mean you have national security advisor Condoleezza Rice, you have Colin Powell in the State Department, both of whom seem to be sophisticated and have been around the block and understand. Is it that this is political or visceral? What is happening do you think?*

GREGG: Well I think what is happening is that the philosophy of the Bush administration was shaped by a group of people who called themselves, before the election, they called themselves the Vulcans. That is named for the big statue of the god of fire that is on a ridge above Birmingham where Condi Rice grew up. The Vulcans consisted of Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Bill Kristol, Scooter Libby, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Rice. They were intellectual descendants, particularly Wolfowitz, of the Wohlstetter at the University of Chicago, who felt that we should have been much more preemptive against the Japanese before Pearl Harbor. It is also influenced by another professor, whose name escapes me, who felt that Athens should have been more pre-emptive against Sparta. So this is the doctrine that they sold to Bush, that to maintain our role as the world's only superpower, we need to be unilateral if need be. We need to go into pre-emptive action, and we need to

## Library of Congress

engage in regime change. I think those are the touchstones and 9-11 seemed to validate it.

There is the President has said you are either with us or against us, and he sees North Korea as evil. Wolfowitz recently, in referring to Saddam Hussein, he said, "Saddam Hussein was in the same category as Hitler, Stalin, and Kim Jong Il. Sooner or later those people are not just content to bring evil down upon their own people. It spills over their borders and they have to be dealt with." Now the president has distanced himself from that kind of rhetoric. He says he is committed to a diplomatic solution. I heard Secretary Powell give a wonderful speech yesterday after flying down here. He was talking about democracy in Asia and the development of democracy in Asia. He was highly enthused about that. I am very thankful that he has stayed as Secretary of State. I think he gives us some credibility and some substance that would otherwise be lacking. I think he has a very hard row to hoe, but I think he has been given more leeway on Korea. Wolfowitz said in my presence last October, "The State Department is now in the lead on Korea." That had not been the case in the past. But you still have people like John Bolton who is undersecretary for proliferation who is out there. He is as unpopular in South Korea as he is in North Korea, talking about coercion and sanctions.

*Q: The North Koreans have said they won't talk to him again.*

GREGG: Right. I don't think they have ever talked to him. They denounced him in no uncertain terms.

*Q: Right now we are going through a period where the North Koreans are sort of challenging us by going ahead with nuclear developments. Is this, how do we read this? What are they doing? What are they after?*

GREGG: They are after a changed policy on our part. They are truly concerned about our military intentions toward them. I went to a Track II, six-party meeting in Qingdao last September, hosted by the Chinese. Some of them had been to the previous official six-



## Library of Congress

party talks in Beijing just less than two weeks before. The same ground was covered. The leading Chinese figure there was a woman named Fouying, a very accomplished diplomat. She said, "We all agree, including North Korea, that we want to have a nuclear free Korean Peninsula. We all agree, including North Korea, that where we want to end up is a verifiably nuclear free Korean Peninsula where North Korea's security and economic concerns are adequately dealt with. The problem is we don't know how to get from position A to position B, and that is still the problem because the Bush administration says we will not submit to blackmail. We will not reward that behavior, and the new mantra is CVID, completely verifiably, irreversible dismantlement of all nuclear programs." They want Korea to do what Qaddafi had done. I saw Kelly briefly yesterday, and Colin Powell had said that some progress had been made in Beijing, but it is going to be a long slow process because we and the North Koreans are staring at each other across a chasm of mistrust. In the meantime the U.S.- South Korean relationship is in the worst shape I think it has perhaps ever been. Because the alliance which has been geared to joint opposition to North Korea as the implacable foe, in the wake of the summit of 2000, no longer works because the South Koreans now see the North Korean, these are the younger people at least, as perhaps a long lost brother who has acquired some bad habits and needs rehabilitation and tender loving care rather than punishment. The older Koreans are still very suspicious of North Korea, but the younger Koreans are very accepting of the North. They think the North would never use nuclear weapons against them. They see the United States, many of them see the United States as a greater threat to their ongoing security than North Korea. The relationship is in very difficult shape.

*Q: Well you know the great concern is that the North Koreans being hard pressed for money, that there could be leakage of nuclear weapons to a terrorist. That would put the?*

GREGG: Absolutely. That is a red line, and I have written the North Koreans. I am in touch with them, and I wrote them when there was a statement hinting that that might happen. When I went there the first time, I said that it is just imperative that you completely



## Library of Congress

distance yourselves from any form of terrorism. They said, "We have already signed two UN measures against terrorism."

So I agreed that could happen and that is our concern. I don't think they had any intention of doing that. The sort of nuclear bazaar that has been run out of Pakistan has been of deep concern on that score.

*Q: The North Koreans were at one point you know, selling drugs. Their embassies were selling drugs to maintain themselves. I mean how dire would you say their straits are?*

GREGG: Well I think it is somewhat, I have talked at length to people who have been up there delivering food and medicine and so forth. They have allowed market gardens to be cultivated for the profit of the owners. That has improved the food situation to some extent. They had a somewhat better rice crop than last year, but they have cut down all their trees. They have lousy fertilizer, primitive agricultural technique. They are very vulnerable to fluctuations of temperature and rainfall, and so they have a food, they have had a food shortage, and there has been starvation. It is still bad, but it is somewhat better than it was. There is still a great power shortage. But even in my two trips to Pyongyang in April and November of 2002, I saw improvement in Pyongyang in those six months in terms of food stalls in the streets, more cars, so forth. Now Pyongyang is much better than the worst provinces up along the Chinese border are still in very bad shape.

*Q: The Japanese factor recently, has that been?*

GREGG: Well, I was at another conference in Japan just before Koizumi went to Pyongyang, and we had at this conference, some Chinese who were very knowledgeable of the North Koreans having spent years in Pyongyang. The major concerns on the part of the Japanese were those abductees. The Chinese said, "Oh, they will never admit this." Well Kim Jong Il did admit it. He apparently thought that that would somehow put the issue behind them.

## Library of Congress

*Q: These were Japanese citizens?*

GREGG: These were Japanese citizens who were kidnapped by the North Koreans so that they could use them as models to train agents to act like Japanese. Maybe 30 were kidnapped. They allowed some to return to Japan. The Japanese have not returned them. The issue has bubbled up. It has backfired, and the North Koreans are furious at the Japanese and make the point that the Japanese never speak of the tens of thousands of young Korean women they kidnapped and forced to be comfort women for the imperial army. So the, you know the thinking is at some point the Japanese will pay reparations to North Korea. Sort of that money that would be in the billions would help kick start the economy. North Korea, I felt quite comfortable there because I was dealing with Koreans, and I understand the Koreans. It is a terrible regime. It is a repressive regime. It is a brutal regime. The question is how do you get them to stop being repressive and brutal. My suggested solution is to let them develop economically, improve the living standard of their own people, give Kim Jong Il a real chance to survive. I suggested that his role model ought to be Fidel Castro who has presided over a decrepit society but still maintains some degree of respect at home. How he does it I don't know. The South Koreans hope he will be a Deng Xiaoping, a real reformer. I am not sure he is capable of that.

*Q: Is somebody talking to Kim Jong Il? I mean you were mentioning Park Chung Hee, you know, who brought him bad news? Do you feel that there is contact with him?*

GREGG: Well, yes. Putin refers to him as a completely modern person. They apparently get along quite well. He has got some good give and take relations with the Chinese. He has met a number of South Koreans including Kim de Jong. Everybody I have talked to who has talked to him directly says he is a highly intelligent man. For example, he reads the daily press out of Korea on the web site every day. He goes to the web site of the Blue House.

*Q: That is the White House of South Korea.*

## Library of Congress

GREGG: Yes. He complimented the minister of unification under Kim De Jung saying, "You know, I really am very interested in your write up of Park Chung Hee, because I want to do some of the same things for North Korea that Park Chung Hee did for South Korea in terms of jump starting the economy. So I think he has a recalcitrant military that he has trouble dealing with. I think he has a small coterie of people around him who are fairly enlightened.

*Q: Okay, Don, I think this is a good place to stop.*

GREGG: Okay.

End of interview